

REVIVAL OF HANDLOOM INDUSTRY: NEED OF THE HOUR

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ABSTRACT

Handloom industry is one of the most important segments of Indian textile industry. It is not only the important part of Indian textile industry but also an important part of Indian legacy. Handloom products have been playing an important role in Indian economy since a long time. It is one of the largest economic activities providing direct or indirect employment to a large segment of persons engaged in weaving and allied activities. However, as per the latest census of handloom, the number of persons engaged in weaving and allied activities was lower than the earlier one. Hence there is an urgent need to revive this industry. There is a need to give attention to the point that what could be done as a designer, as a researcher and as a marketer to revive this industry not only in international market but also at the grass root level. This paper mainly deals with the present status of handloom industry to emphasise what could be done further.

KEYWORDS: Handloom, Khadi, Power Loom, Handloom Census, Textiles

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INTRODUCTION:

One of the famous quotes of Mahatma Gandhi “Revival of hand spinning and hand weaving will make a largest contribution to the economic and moral regeneration of India” still have the same significance in present Indian scenario. Indian textile industry comprises four important segments these are Modern Textile Mills, Independent Power looms, Handlooms, Garments (Knitwear). Handloom is one of the most important segments of textile industry. This sector also plays an important role by providing substantial contribution to GDP of India. Indian handloom products range from coarse cloth to very fine fabrics from a variety of fibres such as cotton, silk, tasar, jute, wool and synthetic blends. This sector contributes nearly 19% of the total cloth produced in the country and also adds substantially to export earnings (Kaushik and Jain, 2015). Handloom forms a part of the heritage of India and exemplifies the richness and diversity of our country and the artistry of the weavers. The handloom production meets the twin objectives of green production and employment creation especially in the rural India. However the number of persons engaged in weaving and allied activities was lower than as per second handloom census. This is mainly due to relatively low earning from handloom. The challenges in this sector include inadequate training for up gradation of skills, unorganised structure, weak financial base of the weavers etc. But the major and fundamental challenges are lack of innovative designs and inadequate fashion marketing. Hence specific steps have been initiated for revival of handloom industry and as a result of effective Government intervention through financial assistance and implementation of various developmental and welfare schemes, this sector has been able to withstand competition from the power loom and mill sectors. Various designers and brands are also

working for the upliftment of handloom sector. But still there is a need of proper designing, research work and promotion for the sustainability of this sector.

HANDLOOM AND ITS PRODUCTS

The Handloom (Reservation and Articles for Production) Act, 1985, defined handloom as “any loom other than power loom”. In 2012, a new definition was proposed: “Handloom means any loom other than power loom; and includes any hybrid loom on which at least one process of weaving require manual intervention or human energy for production. But it was recommended by the sub-committee made on this issue, that in the process of weaving, the weaver does not use power and hence the definition of handloom need not be changed and it should remain in the purest form. Hence no amendment has been made in the Handloom Reservation Act to change the definition of handloom (PIB, 2014). Making of Handloom products is not a single activity but it is a group of activities. This group of activities comprises pre-loom, and post loom activities along with the actual weaving i.e. on loom activity. Pre loom activities consist the preparation of yarn i.e. Warping, Sizing, winding and beaming. After that actual weaving process starts on loom. Actual weaving process consist primary actions such as shading, picking, beating, and secondary motions consist letting off, and taking off actions. Post loom activities comprise the finishing of the fabric. Handloom products are broadly categorised into two categories one of them is *Khadi* and another one is *Handloom* fabrics. The main difference between *khadi* and other handloom fabric is that the fabrics woven out of hand spun yarn on handlooms are called “*khadi*”, while mill spun yarn woven on handlooms are called “*handloom*” fabrics (Castelino, 2014). Handloom products are developed in different regions of the country and each region products has its own unique designs motifs colour combination and techniques.

SIGNIFICANCE OF HANDLOOM PRODUCTS

The handloom products have a unique place in the Indian textile industry. These handloom products are unparalleled in its flexibility to permit experiments and encouraging innovation. The innovative designs of the handloom cannot be replicated by the power loom sector. In this era of climate change the handloom products can be considered as environmental friendly products because of its very less use of energy resources such as electricity and fuel. Handloom industry plays a major role in providing employment. According to the census of 2009-10 it was estimated that handloom industry provides the employment opportunities to 43.31 lakh handloom workers. Handloom promotion council of ministry of textile reported that Handloom products do have a great demand in an International Market paving way for the growth in GDP on national Front on one hand and a financial Support to an weaver on the other.

PROBLEMS IN MARKETING OF HANDLOOM PRODUCTS

Despite of having a part of Indian legacy the status of handloom industry is declining due to the tough completion from the power loom market. Nadh, et al, 2013 suggested the following reasons to emphasise the problem in the handloom sector.

- Lack of awareness about the product features
- Lack of availability of market information.
- Insufficient Promotion and Advertisement of Handloom
- Lack of Quality Standardization

- The greater part of the government effort in the area of R&D is also not sufficient.
- Imitation of handloom products is being done by the power loom industry at low cost and low price

INITIATIVES FOR THE REVIVAL OF THE HANDLOOM INDUSTRY

After analysing the problems of handloom sector it has been found that there is the need for the revival of the handloom industry. Recently Government have announced a number of schemes for this industry. This sector is also getting the attention of the designers and the researchers.

Government Initiatives

The Office of the Development Commissioner for Handlooms has been implementing various schemes for the promotion and development of the handloom sector. The main aim of these schemes is to provide assistance to the handloom weavers in a variety of ways. The main Objectives of the schemes are to provide input, infrastructural and marketing support, then modernisation and up gradation of technology, promotion of the products, development of exportable products and assistance in research and development related to the handloom. The programme and scheme are also aimed for the welfare of the handloom weavers under the 12th five year plan the following

National Handloom Development Programme

This programme have two component

- **Comprehensive Handlooms Developments Scheme**
 - Integrated handlooms development schemes (IHDS)
 - Marketing and Export Promotion Scheme(MEPS)
 - Diversified Handloom Development Schemes (DHDS)
- **Revival, Reform And Restructuring (RRR) Package For Handloom Sector**

Handloom Weavers Comprehensive Welfare Schemes-Two Component

- Health insurance scheme for access to health care facilities
- Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Bima Yojna for life insurance

Yarn Supply Scheme

Comprehensive Handloom Cluster Development Scheme

Under the union budget 2014-15 for handloom sector by ministry of textile, government of India, Rs 50 Crore is provided to set up a trade facilitation centre and a crafts museum in Varanasi. Sum of Rs 500 Crore is provided for developing a textile mega-cluster at Varanasi and six more at Bareilly, Lucknow, Surat, Kutch, Bhagalpur and Mysore. Rs 20 crore is provided to set up a hastkala academy in Delhi. Rs 50 crore is provided to start a pashmina promotion programme (p-3) and development of other crafts of Jammu & Kashmir. There is also the provision for enhancing the stipend of the students of the IIHT to facilitate the students. in Varanasi, it has chosen through a tendering process two design houses — Sai creation and Rinku Sobti fashions — which have to work closely with Varanasi weavers and provide them at least 2,200 new designs in the next two years, in addition to a buyback guarantee of products worth Rs 4.4 Crore.

The government will also encourage fashion school students to undertake more field visits to handloom clusters and include more chapters on handloom in their curriculum.

The first national handloom day has been launched on 7th august 2015. On the same day the Indian handloom brand has been launched by the prime minister, for better market positioning of quality handloom products. The Handloom brand signifies high quality defect free, socially and environmentally compliant products for catering to the needs of high end consumers (PIB, 2015).

Designer's Initiatives

A wide variety of modern style from Khadi and other handloom fabric are being designed by various renowned Indian designers. The new face of Khadi has introduced itself in a wide range from traditional kurtas in unique colour combinations such as shades of maroon with mustard and black, navy blue with shades of yellow and lively colours of turquoise, pink and orange to the modern pin-tuck crop tops paired over sleeveless top, peplum tops, palazzos and shorts. Ritu Kumar, Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Gaurang are working on the reinventing the handloom fabric. Anita Dongre latest label, "Grass root" has been initiated with the aim to empower craftsmen. Banarasi and ikat are the main features of her label (Shrikumar, 2015). Sabyasachi Mukherjee is a pioneer in reviving Indian textiles in a modern context with the use of indigenous methods such as brocades, bandhani, gota work, block printing and hand-dyeing in handloom products. The Raghavendra Rathore Foundation uses Banarasi silk in its signature style. Rathore also works closely with artisans to reinvent khadi, silks and other hand-woven fabrics. Anand Kabra has created a blend of mul and khadi that has named as Malkha. Deepika Govind has worked with weavers from UP, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Odisha, and Assam to produce indigo-dyed khadi, tencel khadi, khadi silk, and knit khadi (Mitali Parekh, 2015). Priyanjoli specialises in making Khadi Western garments like skirts, shirts, pants among others (PTI, 2015).

Researches' Initiatives

This is the area which requires special attention of the researchers. Various studies are being conducted to assess the awareness regarding the handloom products among the different section of the society. Fabric texture and comfort properties are being enhanced through specific finishes application, Psychological, economical and social aspect of handloom weavers are being studied. Ergonomic studies could be conducted to make the handloom work stress free. Special finishes has been applied to improve resiliency and hand-feel of the naturally coloured cotton khadi fabric (Mulasavalagi and Naik, 2005). The effect of Enzymes and Swelling Agents on Colour Strength (K/S) Property of natural dyes on Khadi Cotton Fabric has also been studied (Dixit and Jahan, 2013). In another study effect of resin finishing on crease recovery and related properties of Khadi fabric has also been assessed (Pant and Tuteja, 2010). A comparative study on the effect of finishing agents on stiffness and drape of khadi fabric has also been conducted to improve the performance of khadi fabric (Pant and Sonee 2014).

CONCLUSIONS

The problems which are associated with handloom products are a grass root level problem of our country as it is a part of our country's heritage. It is the responsibility of the research scholars of various disciplines to think towards this direction. Handloom based textiles needed a revival because somewhere this important part of Indian heritage is being forgotten. Handloom products are not only just the part of Indian heritage but it is also the source of the sustainability of livelihood and environment. The majority of youngsters of present generation have stopped buying hand woven garments.

Everybody is obsessed with imported and international brands that are coming in. "It's high time we should respect our own legacy." The main aim of this paper is to sensitise the readers that this is the area which requires the attention as a designer, as a researcher, as a marketer and of course as an aware consumer who could understand the grass root level problem of their own country.

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